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REAGAN NAMES 3 TO EXAMINE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL; OTHER IRAN INQUIRIES WIDEN

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 26 — Amid the crisis over secret dealings with Iran and the Nicaraguan rebels, President Reagan appointed a three-member panel today to investigate the role of his own National Security Council.

Nonetheless on Capitol Hill, several Democratic committee chairmen in the House and the Senate made it clear that they intended to press forward with their own inquiries on the disclosures about the affair. Some Democrats called for the resignation of Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff.

The President's action, announced shortly before he left for Thanksgiving at his ranch in California, came as the Justice Department broadened its investigation into the secret arms shipments to Iran and the diversion of millions of dollars from the arms sales to Nicaraguan rebels.

F.B.I. Is Involved

The department announced that its inquiry into the affair had become a major criminal investigation that would include agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d, meanwhile, said the Justice Department was investigating several consultants and others "who have a tangential relationship with the U.S. Government" for possible involvement in the effort to funnel Iranian money to the Nicaraguan rebels, or contras.

The Justice Department moves seemed to be an effort to pre-empt Congressional investigations by Senate and House committees, now controlled by the Democrats.

Possible Middle East Mission

In another development, State Department officials said today that the Administration was considering sending Vice President Bush or Secretary of State George P. Shultz to the Middle East in an effort to bolster American standing in the region in the aftermath of the Iran revelations.

With the White House in the grip of what one ranking official called "a crisis atmosphere," Mr. Reagan announced that former Senator John G. Tower of Texas would head a "special review board" to examine the operations of the National Security Council. Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter resigned as national security adviser on Tuesday, and a deputy, Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North, was dismissed.

Also serving on the panel will be former

Secretary of State Edmund S. Muskie and a former national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, a former vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he had "one reservation" about the appointment of Mr. Tower. "I hope that Senator Tower will clearly and quickly set out his relationship with Bud McFarlane," Mr. Moynihan said.

Robert C. McFarlane worked for Senator Tower as an aide on the Senate Armed Services Committee from 1979 to 1981. Mr. McFarlane, a former national security adviser who traveled to Iran as part of the secret arms deal, was said by Mr. Meese on Tuesday to have been aware of the diversion of money to the contras.

Reagan Reported 'Very Upset'

Mr. Reagan, who left today for his ranch near Santa Barbara, Calif., for the holiday weekend, has said he was "not fully informed" that up to \$30 million had been secretly funneled to Nicaraguan rebels from the arms sale to Iran. Mr. Reagan was described by one key aide today as concerned that the controversy would "leave a permanent scar" on his Presidency.

"He's very upset," the Reagan aide said. "We're sick about it. Regan is sick about it. And it's not over yet. We know that we don't know the full story."

There were indications that the President's appointment of a new panel to investigate the actions of the National Security Council would do little to quell the crisis.

In a statement, Mr. Reagan said the new panel would conduct a "prompt and thorough" study of the National Security Council and would examine the council's role "in the development, coordination, oversight and conduct of foreign and national security policy."

Planning New Appointment

Meanwhile, a senior White House aide said Mr. Reagan was planning to name a new national security adviser to replace Admiral Poindexter within the next week, possibly by the weekend while in Santa Barbara. Mr. Reagan discussed the matter this morning in the White House with Secretary of State George P. Shultz as well as with Mr. Regan and other key Administration officials.

Those under consideration, officials said, include Mr. Tower and Mr. Scowcroft as well as the Secretary of the Navy, John F. Lehman Jr.; Max M. Kampelman, the chief United States arms negotiator at Geneva; David M. Abshire, the United States Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Kenneth L. Adelman, head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and Paul Laxalt, who is retiring as a Republican Senator from Nevada.

A White House official said Mr. Reagan was seeking someone to head the National Security Council who was "experienced in foreign affairs, politically smart, politically sensitive, well-respected by Congress."

The official said that Mr. Regan, the White House chief of staff, who has been the object of increased criticism because of the initial decision to proceed with the clandestine arms sale to Iran, has been upset that the national security adviser reports directly to the President and not to him. Accordingly, the official said, Mr. Regan feels he is sometimes told of decisions after the fact and is thus unable to influence the President.

Admiral Poindexter, like his predecessor, Mr. McFarlane, was one of the few people allowed to see the President alone.

Mr. Regan, who accompanied the President to Santa Barbara, told reporters today that "the N.S.C. does not report to me."

Comparing the controversy to a bank found to be guilty of fraud, Mr. Regan asked and answered a hypothetical question: "Does the bank President know whether a teller in the bank is fiddling around with the books? No."

The Justice Department, meanwhile, said a "full-scale" investigation would replace a fact-finding team that first uncovered evidence of the multimillion dollar diversion of Iranian payments to the contras, a department official said.

Another department official said the F.B.I. was expected to join the inquiry late today and assign agents with high

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security clearances. The clearances will give them access to top-secret White House documents in the case, officials said.

The broadened Justice Department inquiry was ordered by Attorney General Meese, who led the team last weekend that interviewed the President and other Administration officials about the Iran deal.

Among those interviewed, officials said, were Mr. Regan, Mr. Shultz, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger and William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence.

A department official said Mr. Meese's involvement in the case was motivated by concern over conflicting accounts of the arms deal, and also by a belief that the debate could cause irreparable damage to the President.

Issue of Special Prosecutor

Department officials said they were weighing whether to seek a special prosecutor, or independent counsel. In the past, the Justice Department has responded slowly to requests for appointment of outside prosecutors in politically sensitive cases.

But lawyers with ties to the Justice Department said mounting pressure on Capitol Hill and concern that a variety of laws might have been violated in the arms deal would probably force Mr. Meese to turn the investigation over to someone else.

The official said Mr. Meese's investigation began last Thursday, when he and the Assistant Attorney General for Legal Counsel, Charles J. Cooper, were reviewing testimony to be given to Congress regarding the arms deal.